### Debating About U.S. Grand Strategy is Important

#### It is important for ordinary citizens to debate grand strategy.

Thayer 7 — Bradley A. Thayer, Associate Professor in the Department of Defense and Strategic Studies at Missouri State University, 2007 (“Reply to Christopher Layne: The Strength of the American Empire," *American Empire: A Debate*, Published by Routledge, ISBN 0415952034, p. 103)

During World War I, the French statesman Gorges Clemenceau famously defended his right to direct his country’s military affairs over the objections of the military. He is often quoted as saying “War is too serious a matter to entrust to military men.” I would like to amend that: American grand strategy is too serious a matter to entrust solely to academics, or politicians and policy-makers, or issue-advocates and lobbyists. It is the proper purview of all Americans and is too serious a business to entrust to anyone but them. The spirit that animates this book is that the American people, as well as people in other countries, should understand the costs and benefits of American grand strategy and debate the grand strategic alternatives available to the United States.

This book is an effort to promote understanding of the grand strategy of the United States, its grand strategic options, as well as the benefits and risks associated with them. Layne and I are powerful advocates of alternative grand strategies, but we join each other in recognizing the importance of this debate and in our desire to foster it. We recognize that Americans can and will disagree about the proper role of the United States in international politics and how best to advance and defend the interests of the United States.

#### U.S. grand strategy affects everyone — debating about it is important.

Thayer 7 — Bradley A. Thayer, Associate Professor in the Department of Defense and Strategic Studies at Missouri State University, 2007 (“The Case For The American Empire,” *American Empire: A Debate*, Published by Routledge, ISBN 0415952034, p. 2)

Thinking about America’s grand strategy is important for two major reasons. First, it affects all Americans and, indeed, people the world over from Afghanistan to Zimbabwe. In sum, you may not be interested in America’s grand strategy, but America’s grand strategy may be interested in you. If you are an American, it influences you by determining whether you fight in a war, how you fight it, and with whom. It affects America’s economy, and that makes it easier for you to find employment or to keep you from employment. So it is important for Americans to think about the role their country plays in the world and whether they believe it to be the right one. People in other countries are also influenced by how America acts, the countries it sees as allies and enemies, as well as by what countries and resources it chooses to defend. The American people derive much benefit from America’s predominant place in the world but it also entails significant costs. While I believe that the benefits outweigh the costs, at the end of the day it is for the American people as a whole to decide if that is so.

#### The stakes are too high to avoid debates over U.S. grand strategy — it affects everyone.

Layne and Thayer 7 — Christopher Layne, Associate Professor in the Bush School of Government and Public Service at Texas A&M University, and Bradley A. Thayer, Associate Professor in the Department of Defense and Strategic Studies at Missouri State University, 2007 (“Preface and Acknowledgements,” *American Empire: A Debate*, Published by Routledge, ISBN 0415952034, p. ix-xi)

In academe, professors are expected to teach and to research. But—especially in a discipline like international politics that has profound real-world implications—we also have a duty to participate in public debates about U.S. foreign policy and to distill for nonacademics the theories and ideas that often drive U.S. behavior in the international system. At the end of the day, we are not only professors, but citizens. And as citizens we have a deep stake in ensuring that our nation remains secure and free. In this book, we hope to inform our readers and help them understand the pros and cons of two very different approaches to grand strategy that have the same goal. [end page ix]

We hope that after reading the two arguments presented here our readers will be better able to decide for themselves which of the two grand strategic visions presented here will best serve America’s interests.

Grand strategy, what the military historian Edward Meade Earle called “the highest type of strategy,” is the most crucial task of statecraft.1 As historian Geoffrey Parker observes, grand strategy “encompasses the decisions of a state about its overall security—the threats it perceives, the way in which it confronts them, and the steps it takes to match ends and means 2 Distilled to its essence, grand strategy is about determining the state’s vital interests— that is, those that are important enough for which to fight—and its role in the world. From that determination springs a state’s ambitions, alliances, overseas military commitments, conception of its stakes in the prevailing international order, and the size and structure of its armed forces.

In formulating grand strategy, states must match their resources to their security requirements while simultaneously striking the proper balance between the competing demands of external and domestic policy.3 Grand strategy requires the integration of the state’s military and economic power, as well as diplomacy, to attain its interests. Thus, as Paul Kennedy observes, “The crux of grand strategy lies therefore in policy, that is, in the capacity of the nation’s leaders to bring together all of the elements, both military and non-military, for the preservation and enhancement of the nation’s long-term (that is, in wartime and peacetime) best interests.”4 Well-conceived grand strategies maximize the state’s opportunity to further its interests peacefully. Flawed grand strategies can have a range of harmful effects, including overexpansion. In making grand strategy, therefore, it is important that policy-makers “get it right.”

Grand strategy is not an abstract subject. 9/11 made this abundantly clear. Grand strategy is something that directly affects the lives and security—and even the prosperity—of all Americans. Events subsequent to 9/11 have confirmed this lesson. Along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border, U.S. troops continue to hunt for Osama bin Laden, and in Afghanistan itself, the United States—with support from NATO—is trying to suppress the remnants of the Taliban and establish a stable government. In Iraq, of course, the United States is involved in fighting an ongoing insurgency while simultaneously trying to prevent a civil war and assist the Iraqis in making a successful transition to democracy. Although there is no end in sight at this time to the American military involvement in Iraq, the United States finds itself involved in crises with both Iran and North Korea because of those two states’ nuclear ambitions. And, of course—looming on the geopolitical horizon—China’s rapid strides toward great power status raise important questions about the future of international politics generally, and about the Sino—American relationship specifically. All of these issues will affect Americans’ lives in coming years [end page x] 5. We hope this book will contribute to that debate.